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CHILD LABOR AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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As a member of the profession of school teaching in Cincinnati, I am very happy to have the opportunity to express our appreciation of the Convention of the National Child Labor Committee meeting in our city.

Although we have very good laws in Ohio, comparatively speaking, and we believe that they are enforced as well as might be under present conditions, we find ourselves quite in the position of the good people of New York. We need to be educated, we need to have the public opinion of our community better informed and our hearts and consciences quickened to the importance of the execution of these statutes.

A gentleman told me yesterday an incident that will illustrate our need in this respect. A rather prominent lady who saw an advertisement of the great meeting last night in the daily papers remarked to another lady, "Well, I am glad to see that there is going to be a meeting here for child labor. I am really tired of seeing so many big children ten years old playing in the streets." I think I will take her remark for my text.

As was said at the meeting last night, the object of government is not merely the protection, but the development of men. That lesson was enforced last night by every speaker, I believe, who addressed us. In Cincinnati, as in other parts of the country, we are coming to realize better and better that government does not mean merely jails and policemen, but it means every agency for the complete development of the child and the man. As I look at it, there are a number of institutions in society that develop man, five of which I will mention: the home, the school, the church, the state, and the professional and industrial occupations. Through them man is to be developed and made a complete human being.

The most important of these is the home; for the home is that institution in which the child discovers his relations to his brethren. In the school the child discovers his relations to the youth of his own age. In the state he discovers his relations to his fellow-men. In business he learns more about his relations to his fellow-men and their needs. And in the church he discovers the relations of his spirit to the great Father of all spirits.

It is through these institutions, then, that we are to develop this complete man. In considering their relative importance in this process we are led to ask, is the home doing its duty, here in Cincinnati and in America? My friends, let me say this much: I do not believe that this curse of child labor is to be attributed entirely to the greed of manufacturers. I think we may have put too much emphasis on that. They are greedy for cheap labor, to be sure, but what about the greed of the parent? Neither is it true that child labor is to be traced altogether to the greed of the parent combined with the greed of the manufacturer. The child himself is often greedy—greedy for activity, for association, for money, and so for work. Though doubtless he is encouraged in this from the very first by his parents, his greed is one influence. Let us not put the responsibility for it wholly upon any of these. I tell you one great reason that the child goes to the factory is that the home is not what it ought to be; and one great reason that the home is not what it ought to be is that here in America we have not a proper distribution of the results, the products of labor. It is the poverty of the home that drives the child into the factory. If we had in this so-called free republic a proper distribution of the wealth of all the people through the homes of all the people, we would not have that curse of poverty which is driving the children into the factories and causing child slavery.

I wish I had the time to speak of the home as an influence against child slavery; but I must say that wherever the home is what it ought to be, there the man and the woman are the citizens they ought to be. Take the great German nation as an example. It is the home tie that makes the German what he is. It is his love of home and love of the school, which is everywhere the supplement of the home, that has made Germany the great power in Central Europe. So it is with the English people; and with the Scotch more especially. It is their pure Christian homes and their schools

that, ever since the days of John Knox, have made them a power in Great Britain. I believe every member of the present Cabinet of the Liberal Party in England is a Scotchman, and with two exceptions, that there is not a single English lord in the list. It was Scotchmen who established nearly all of our American institutions and who built practically all of our schools. In the land where we find pure homes and good schools, there we find strong men and strong women coming up in every generation.

Next in order would come the influence of the church and religious societies in the development of the spirit; but I must pass that over and talk to you for a few moments from the standpoint of the teacher about the school as a preventive of child slavery. In old times here in America, and more particularly in Germany, in England and the other older countries, there were home industries, besides those of the farm, to train the children to work. For I hold, my friends, that every child needs to be taught to work; but he needs to be taught not in the factory, but in the home and on the farm, with proper surroundings and under proper conditions. I believe that it is a part of the education of every child to be so trained to honest toil. It is just as much a part of his education as training to write or cipher. The old Hebrews believed this; every truly great people have had some system of training their children in manual labor.

Under the old conditions the American child was trained in many trades and industries on the farm. In my boyhood I knew such a farm home in old Virginia. How glad I am that I had that privilege. Upon that old farm there were the flour mill, the cooper shop, the blacksmith shop, the sawmill, the carpenter shop, the tannery and shoe shop, and many other like industries, and we boys had the opportunity of gaining some familiarity with all of them. Then there was not merely the kitchen, but there were the spinning and loom house, the dyehouse, and various other domestic industries grouped around the old plantation home, in which the white girls took part with the negro women. So the boys and girls both had a training in hand work at home under the most healthful conditions that it is possible to conceive. So it was all through the country to a larger or smaller extent.

The trouble at the present day is that since this crowding into cities and this infinite division of industries, opportunities are no

longer afforded in the home for teaching the children to work. So we let them go to the factory.

Now, the child really loves work; the normal child is filled with the love of activity; the desire to do things is constantly stirring him and seeking an outlet. The boy naturally wants to be doing something. A little boy came to my office and wanted to hire as an office boy. I looked at him and said, "My little fellow, you ought to be in school. What do you want to hire out here for?" He said, "I am tired of school—nothing doing." That was a new idea to me—tired of school here in Cincinnati because there was "nothing doing." This boy of fourteen years wanted to go to work because there was "nothing doing" in our schools. I asked myself what that meant. On further inquiry I learned that he meant that he did not see any good in it at all. He had learned to read, write and cipher, and something of geography, history, etc., but he wanted to take an active part in the life of this great city. He wanted to be working, to be making some money and having something to spend, perhaps, but, most of all, to be out in the big world and doing something.

The child wants to get into life, or to be where there is "something doing," and the trouble is that in too many of our schools there is "nothing doing" to meet the active mind of a boy. He is not satisfied with the conventional education, just the three R's and nothing else.

What then have we to do as school teachers? Give them manual training? Yes, manual training is a very good thing as far as it goes. But we have to do more than that; we must put real industrial training in the schools, because we now have nothing of that in the home or on the farm. We live in the cities; we cannot supply our children with such opportunities; we therefore must have more of them in our schools.

"Too many big children playing in the street," the lady said. You laughed at it, as I did at first; but do you know that is a great truth? There are too many children here in Cincinnati playing in the streets. A friend tells me that there are probably fifty thousand children in this city who have no other place to play and go into the streets, because by the very law of their natures they have got to play. So that one of the things we have to do is to provide trade education, industrial education. We must provide opportunities for

the development of the whole life of the child—not merely his intellect, but his physical and his moral being also—and it is chiefly through play, through association with his fellows, that he develops these phases of his nature. Next to industrial education the great needs of our schools are playgrounds and recreation centers.

If we provide for the whole life of the child, for the development of his whole nature; if we provide sufficient avenues for his characteristic powers and activities; if we give him opportunity both to learn and to work as he wants to work and to build up and develop his social nature as he desires, and do it in the school, he will continue there as long as we want him to stay. Let us have not merely manual training, but industrial education; let us have playgrounds in greater measure; let us give the life of the child free vent. The great longing of every human being is for life, ever more and ever more life. This is the great call that comes up from the poor and oppressed everywhere; from the poor farmer living in his sod hut in the far west, as from the factory slave in his dark tenement in the city, ever the call comes, "Life, more life!" It is the demand of every human heart, young and old. "It is the infant crying in the night, the infant crying for the light."

When we provide for the full life of the child we will not have to make so many laws for compulsory education or against child labor.